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Goetsch pleads guilty to impersonating Army officer

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Alan Everett Goetsch Jr. pleaded guilty Friday morning to a charge of impersonating a military officer, one day after he was indicted on that and several other charges by a federal grand jury in Montgomery.

Goetsch, who was arrested at Fort Rucker April 10 by FBI agents, agreed to a plea bargain with the U.S. Attorney's Office before U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson in federal court Friday.

A 10-count indictment was issued against Goetsch by the grand jury, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Truncale. The charges included events surrounding Goetsch's impersonation of an Army captain, Truncale said. With Goetsch's guilty plea to the felony charge of "false personation of an Army officer," he said the remaining charges against him were dropped.

"Between Jan. 1, 1985 and April 9, 1985, Goetsch falsely pretended to be a captain in the U.S. Army," Truncale said. "Using forged documents he was able to gain access to Army facilities at Fort Rucker and elsewhere and to participate in Army training exercises."

According to Truncale, a plea bargain agreement was tentatively reached between Goetsch and the U.S. Attorney's office last week, prior to the grand jury session.

"HAD WE FOREGONE presenting the case to the grand jury, we would not be able to charge him if he had elected to change his mind on the agreement," Truncale said. "We had to present it to the grand jury to preserve our interests."

Truncale said the charges against

Goetsch included illegally participating in helicopter parachute jumps at Fort Benning, Ga. and Fort Rucker.

Fort Rucker spokesman Larry Retta had earlier confirmed that Goetsch had made the jumps. Retta declined to comment on Goetsch's plea Friday, other than to say, "We're still continuing our investigation."

Dothan attorney Jerry Herring, who represents Goetsch, said Friday that his client "just felt like it was the best thing to do under the circumstances. It was the most judicial thing to do in view of the 10count indictment."

However, Herring said that Goetsch, 34, of Red Bluff, Calif., continues to contend that he was researching medical relief projects to Central America for the CIA while at Fort Rucker.

"We're going to go on with it the way we have been and will present our side at the sentencing hearing," Herring said.

Thompson ordered a pre-sentence investigation for Goetsch, and set a sentencing hearing to be held in Montgomery within 30 days.

"I JUST HOPE the judge will give us consideration in sentencing when he hears the story," Herring said, adding that he was unsure of the exact date for the sentencing hearing. "I just can't believe he went to all that trouble just as a fantasy."

Thompson set a \$10,000 bond for Goetsch on the impersonation charge, but Goetsch had not made bond Friday.

Herring said he expected Goetsch to make bond sometime next week.

Truncale said if convicted, Goetsch could be imprisoned for up to three

years, and could be fined up to \$250,000.

Truncale said he would oppose probation for Goetsch. "I would absolutely object to probation. I feel the evidence is clear that he committed the crime. He pled guilty to what he was charged with and, all factors considered, I believe a sentence should be served."

Patty Volz, a spokeswoman for the CIA, declined to comment Friday on Goetsch's plea. However, she did say Goetsch's case was not unusual.

"We get charges such as his all the time," she said. "It's a favorite for people to hang their hat on the CIA. We can't respond to all those allegations or we'd be doing it all the time."

FBI Special Agent Supervisor Edmund Bazar declined to comment on Goetsch's plea Friday.